



SENATE BILL 670: Revise Membership/Hearing Aid Fitters Board

2011-2012 General Assembly

Committee: Senate Finance
Introduced by: Sen. Hartsell
Analysis of: Second Edition

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SUMMARY: *Senate Bill 670 authorizes a person who is licensed as an audiologist by the Board of Examiners for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists to fit or sell hearing aids without obtaining a license from the North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board. It also modifies the membership of the Board to reflect this change. The AMENDMENT clarifies the implementation of this change in the membership of the Board.*

CURRENT LAW: It is unlawful for a person to fit or sell hearing aids without being licensed to do so by the North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board.

In addition to this Board, there exists the Board of Examiners for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists. This Board licenses speech pathologists and audiologists independently. To be licensed as an audiologist, a person must possess a doctoral degree in audiology, have 1,800 hours of supervised professional experience, and pass a Board-approved exam.

The licensing chapter for audiologists, Article 22 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes, specifically provides that its licensing requirements do not apply to a person licensed by the North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board and it more specifically provides that nothing in the Article may be construed to prevent a person licensed by the Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board from the practice of fitting and selling hearing aids. The licensing chapter for hearing aid dealers and fitters, Chapter 93D of the General Statutes, does not contain a similar provision.

BILL ANALYSIS: Senate Bill 670 would provide that a person who is licensed as an audiologist by the Board of Examiners for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists may fit and sell hearing aids without being licensed by the North Carolina State Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board. It would also make the following conforming changes throughout the licensure chapter for hearing aid dealers and fitters consistent with this exemption:

- It would allow a person to serve as an apprentice under the supervision of a licensed audiologist.
- It would require an audiologist that supervises an apprentice to register with the Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters Board and pay a registration fee of \$100 a year unless the audiologist is a licensee of the Board.
- It would change the membership of the Board. Under the current law, one member of the seven member board must be an audiologist recommended by the North Carolina Speech and Hearing Association. The bill would replace this appointment with one that would represent the interest of hearing aid consumers. The appointee must be a person with a hearing loss.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act is effective when it becomes law.

AMENDMENT: To effectuate the change in the Board's membership, Section 6 of the bill intends to replace the current audiologist on the Board that is recommended by the North Carolina Speech and Hearing Association with a member with a hearing loss. The amendment clarifies this intent.

Shawn Parker, counsel to the Senate Health Care Committee, substantially contributed to this summary.

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